Labour was scarce and, while hours remained terribly long, it began to be to the interest of employers to improve conditions. On September 24th, 1905, at a huge meeting in Bombay, the demand was made for a twelve-hour day. A Committee was appointed to make a survey of hours of work and conditions and in 1907 a Labour Commission was appointed. A Factories Act was finally passed in 1911, though it met with considerable opposition. It was described by one organisation as "revolutionary, dangerous, and unnecessary"!

The Great War resulted in a great development of Indian industry. Imports were restricted owing to the fact that British ships had been commandeered for the transport of troops and materials. All countries were demanding raw materials. It led to a vast increase in Indian capitalism as opposed to British capital invested in India. Factories sprung up like mushrooms and there was a great demand for labour. While there was a tendency to revert to the bad old days of long hours, the worker was no longer so inarticulate; he demanded and secured better wages. That the employers were making huge profits was obvious to him. Prices were rising also and the workers could not live on the prevailing rates. Strikes occurred, mostly unorganised, and there was so great a pressure on industry that they were generally successful, in so far as the employers were reluctant to have the machines slow down, and so made concessions. But because they feared that the workers would demand a continuance of the same conditions after the War, they resorted to the device of making wage increases in the form of dearness allowances over the rates of £914, which in many places are still adhered to. Though wages were higher in 1916 than before the War, the real wages in relation to the cost of living were often lower than in the pre-War year.

The evil housing conditions to which I have referred